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FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6917
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UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 002186

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DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: TAIWAN'S UN BID, ARMS PROCUREMENTS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage September 25-26 on the aftermath of a Taipei District Court's decision Monday to detain an agent and a former agent of the Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau on suspicion of spying for China; on the 2008 presidential election; on the DPP's controversial "normal country resolution;" and on the Moon Festival Tuesday.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News" urged the DPP to clarify to the Taiwan public the differences between the Republic of China and the Taiwan nation. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News," on the other hand, urged Washington not to delay its approval of the F-16 C/D fighter jets deal to Taiwan and thus send a wrong message to China. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" also discussed Taiwan's arms procurements by calling for balance between the island's defensive and countervailing forces. End summary.

¶3. Taiwan's UN Bid

"No More Torturing: Clarify [the Differences] between the Republic of China and the Taiwan Nation Now!"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (9/26):

"... The DPP plays the very role of an executioner in such political torturing and dismemberment scenes. Take the 'UN referendum' as an example: Chen Shui-bian has been pushing for 'Taiwan's UN bid' on the one hand and 'name change, writing of a new constitution, and Taiwan independence' for the island on the other. What he has been doing was apparently a move toward Taiwan independence. But then he should have stated it very clearly that the 'UN referendum' is a 'referendum on Taiwan independence.' To everyone's surprise, when Washington said the UN referendum is 'a step toward a declaration of Taiwan independence and an alteration of the status quo,' Chen retracted by claiming deceptively that the 'UN referendum,' which is not aimed at changing the island's national name, does not violate the 'Four Nos' pledge. Likewise, take the [DPP's] 'normal country resolution' as an example: The resolution is clearly a declaration of Taiwan independence. But the DPP stopped in the middle of its pushing for the resolution and changed its tone [in the resolution] by saying that [it hopes Taiwan will] 'complete its name change and the writing of a new constitution as early as possible.' Aren't such convulsions in Taiwan independence...a kind of political torture for the 23 million people on Taiwan?

"The DPP's position specified in its 'Resolution on Taiwan's Future' was that 'Taiwan is an independent sovereign state whose name is the Republic of China.' ... But the 'normal country resolution,' be it the original version that advocated 'changing [Taiwan's] national name and writing a new constitution' or the revised one that said [it hopes Taiwan will] 'complete its name change and the writing of

a new constitution as early as possible,' calls for 'de jure Taiwan independence' and has thus denied 'the Republic of China.' As it stands now, how can the DPP not try to explain clearly to the public [the differences] between the Republic of China and the Taiwan nation? ..."

14. Arms Procurements

A) "U.S. Must Not Send Wrong Message"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (9/25):

"For several years, the United States government has pointed to the failure of the Legislative Yuan to approve budget authority for the government to purchase three advanced defense weapon systems as a sign that Taiwan may be unwilling to take responsibility for building its own self-defense capabilities. Fortunately, after three years of legislative boycott and delays by the opposition Kuomintang-led majority, the Legislative Yuan finally in June approved funds for the purchase of 12 P-3C 'Orion' fixed-wing anti-submarine aircraft, agreed to an upgrade of existing Patriot II anti-missile missile systems and approved further study on the proposed purchase of eight diesel-electric submarines. ...

"Moreover, the Legislature also in June gave pre-approval to a budget proposal by the Ministry of National defense for NT\$16 billion in funds toward the purchase of 66 upgraded F-16 C/D Block 52 'Fighting Falcon' multipurpose jet fighters, which Taiwan also urgently needs to restore the balance with a rapidly upgrading PRC air force, which is now equipped with powerful SU-27 'Flanker' jet fighters and retire the last of our obsolete F-5 fighters. ... While media reports indicate that the U.S. State Department is worried that the sale of F-16 C/D fighters will 'send a wrong message' to Taiwan that Washington tacitly supports the U.N. referendum or Taiwan's entry into the U.N., we believe it is more

likely that Washington policy makers are more anxious about how Beijing might spin U.S. agreement to the sale. ...

"While important, the differences on the referendum issue involve short-term political issues, but a delay in approval of a major defensive arms procurements, including the F-16 C/Ds, has the potential to harm the substantive interests of both Taiwan and the United States and also affect the security of other regional democracies. ... In a word, the procurement of the F-16 C/D fighters is a necessary defense against the PRC's threat to Taiwan and is also vital to the maintenance of the line of defense in the Western Pacific for the U.S. and Japan. The timing of the procurement is crucial, not because of any nonexistent connection with the DPP's proposed referendum but because securing its approval from the legislative branch was by no means a simple matter and a future authorization can definitely not be taken for granted.

"As Washington should realize, securing approval for the P-3C Orions and the F-16 C/D Falcons has followed three years of boycotts by the KMT. There is no way to guarantee what the new Legislature to be elected in January will do. Failure to take advantage of the current window of authorization will indeed send messages to both the Taiwan and the PRC governments, but not necessary the message senior leaders in Washington intend. Such a delay will show that Washington places Beijing's 'feelings' and verbal threats above Taiwan's long-term security and could gravely undermine the credibility of the U.S.' own often-repeated demand that Taiwan take action to 'show' our will to maintain a self-defense capability.

"The prospect of a yawning imbalance in air power in the Taiwan Strait will also favor the projection of PRC military power and influence in East and Southeast Asia and into the Western Pacific and give a major political boost to PRC hardliners. Further U.S. appeasement of Beijing at the expense of a democratic ally could also send a message to regional neighbors, from South Korea to Japan and Southeast Asia, that they have little choice but to accommodate the PRC's hegemonic behavior given the questionable will of Washington's own resolve. Washington's unprincipled vocal opposition to Taiwan's internal democratic process regarding the United Nations issue has already sent a wrong message to our

citizens and to the region. A linkage of the U.N. referendum issue with the question of procurement of F-16 C/Ds or other defensive systems will compound the error with a message that would further isolate Taiwan, encourage Beijing's regional ambitions and undermine the credibility and interests of the United States itself."

B) "Taiwan's Military Juggling Act"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (9/25):

"No matter how one looks at it, diplomacy -- the course Taipei has chosen to adopt, despite the arduousness and slowness of it -- is the most reasonable option to advance state interests. Sad to say, however, regardless of whether one is in favor of militarization of the Taiwan Strait or against it, Taiwan must, in the face of potential aggression by China, stand on guard. But as it builds its defenses, the country must juggle defensive and countervailing measures. ... However pessimistic this may sound, people who argue that Taiwan should only purchase and develop defensive weapons have, at best, a tenuous grasp of how military decisions are made.

"Hence, the sporadic rumors that Taiwan is developing missiles capable of reaching major Chinese cities or, more recently, the ado over the possibility that Taiwan would deploy surface-to-surface missiles on Kinmen and Matsu. Whether such a deployment will become reality or not (and the maintenance of a little secrecy on the matter wouldn't necessarily hurt), the very existence of a possibility is enough to play into Beijing's calculations should the moment come when it feels compelled to launch an attack against Taiwan. But Taipei's juggling act involves a third ball, one that it must keep airborne with great caution. A state's ultimate defense lies not in the quantifiable -- e.g. the number of aircraft, subs and missile defense systems it owns -- but rather in its capacity to avert armed conflict in the first place. So, putting diplomacy aside and focusing on the purely military, Taiwan's military build-up must be accompanied by the necessary mechanisms mitigating the risk that war will come not out of will, but through error. ...

"We can all be grateful that Taiwan isn't a warlike country and that in the Strait, only one half of the equation has adopted an aggressive stance. The risk to us all would be all the greater if both were rattling their sabers, or much more threatening if Taipei had chosen to go down the nuclear path. In the end, it all boils down to keeping everything in balance: Building forces while managing to avoid an arms race that, by virtue of its disproportionate opponent, Taiwan cannot hope to win. It means reducing the risks of error by establishing better communication and

greater transparency with the opponent without, on the other hand, revealing one's every position. All that being said, the value of deploying missiles on Kinmen and Matsu, among other options, is open to debate, as is the veil of mystery that surrounds that possibility. But no matter what it does, every offensive capability Taiwan acquires comes with a responsibility to ensure that it doesn't create more danger than it prevents. ..."

YOUNG